

## Pacific Princess' maiden voyage to Samoa



*Pacific Princess docking at the Apia Harbour on a clear sunny day.*

Samoa welcomed for the first time to its shores the Pacific Princess, which arrived on the morning of Thursday, 5th February 2015. This is also the first cruise ship to visit Samoa this year in a series of more than twenty cruises scheduled throughout the year.

The Pacific Princess is owned by Princess Cruises, a British-American owned cruise line and is on its 111 day cruise around the world, and Samoa is its third stop since it began its voyage on 23rd January 2015 from Los Angeles, USA, to Honolulu, Hawaii then to Apia, Samoa.

There to greet and welcome the captain, crew and passengers of the ship were members of the Samoa Ports Authority, the agent - Pacific Forum Line, and the Samoa Tourism Authority.

Onboard the ship were 823 passengers and 320 crew members, with the majority getting onshore and taking advantage of the beautiful day by swimming at the beaches around the outskirts of Upolu Island, visiting the historical, traditional and religious sites, monuments, as well as enjoying the food and hospitality of the locals.

The Pacific Princess departed Apia on the evening of the



*Onboard the Pacific Princess.*

**L-R: Hotel Manager onboard, Unasa Fala Amani (PFL); Cruise Vessel Captain, Galuvao Uili Isara (SPA); Mavaega Mavaega (SPA); Dwayne Bentley (STA), Mautanoa M (SPA).**

same day heading for the Bay of Islands in Aotearoa New Zealand, and continuing its cruise around the world until the 15th of May, 2015.

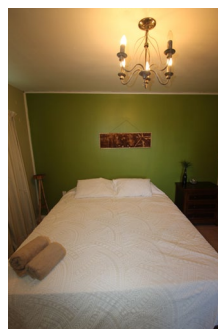
*- Samoa Tourism Authority*

## 'It all starts from the home' - Apaula Stay Inn, Bed & Breakfast

Apaula Stay Inn, located on the eastern side of Mt Vaea, was once the home of its manager, Julia Meredith and her family.

Setting up this Bed and Breakfast accommodation came naturally to Julia who grew up in a working and accommodating family.

"We've always hosted guests in our home especially relatives who would visit and sleep over." Said Julia.



Continued Page 7

**Apaula Stay Inn Rooms and Dining Area.**

# Wetlands for our future



**Minister of MNRE, Hon. Faamoetauloa Lealaialoto Ulaitino Faale Tumaalii.**

**Lake Lanuto'o - Samoa's world recognised wetland.**

**Tourist attraction – Swimming with turtles, Wetlands sanctuary at Satoalepai, Savaii.**

Samoa as a tourist destination plans to be recognised as the leading Pacific destination for sustainable tourism by 2019. That includes conserving and protecting the environment.

Samoa on the 6th of February joined the world in celebrating World Wetlands Day, marking the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Samoa's official ceremony to commemorate this very important day was held in the village of Satoalepai, Savaii with the global theme of 'Wetlands for our future'. The environment, including wetlands continues to be a vital part of sustaining tourism development, let alone the livelihood of people. Wetlands provide a multitude of benefits, including filtering and replenishing of water, providing food, acting as a natural shield to protect our coastlines and mitigating climate change.

The Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Hon. Faamoetauloa Lealaialoto Ulaitino Faale Tumaalii said that for all those who call Samoa their home, this is a time to celebrate this very special part of our natural environment.

"Losing our wetlands means losing the valuable services they provide and this almost always impacts negatively on humans.

"Tourism, food security, fresh water supply and coastal protection are often the most obvious losers when wetlands die." Said Faamoetauloa.

Wetlands include Samoa's rivers, lakes, coral reefs, mangroves, mudflats, marshes and sea grass beds. There are many tourist attractions in Samoa located on wetlands.

- Samoa Tourism Authority

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## Samoa Air and Coral Sun Airways announce flights between Samoa and Kiribati

Samoa Air and Coral Sun Airways have announced their intentions to provide for Regular weekly Air Transport services between their two countries as well as offering charter services across the Pacific. The service will operate by way of a stop at Funafuti Airport in Tuvalu and so provide for a connection from Tuvalu to both Samoa and to Kiribati direct.

None of these routes is being currently serviced and Tuvalu and Kiribati have been without a direct link for many years.

The communion is a Joint Venture between the two Airlines which are both National Carriers and are both Private Enterprise Operators locally owned and operated in their respective countries.

The Service is expected to start in the first week of March.

Other Routes including to Niue, Tonga, Fiji and the Northern

Cook Islands are being evaluated as the two Airlines intend to further develop their joint services in collaboration with other Regional Partners.

The Aircraft is a Beechcraft Super King Air 200 which is a pressurized aircraft with a configuration of 8 seats laid out in Executive style couches and individual seating. The King Air is a multi engine turbo prop and pressurized and cruises at jet levels and has been one of the most popular aircraft of all time. It is the Primary Aircraft used in Australia by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Flights are planned to depart Faleolo Airport on a Tuesday morning and will return via the same route on a Friday. The Airline has applied for a regular service between Samoa and Tonga.



# Visitor arrivals up in 2014

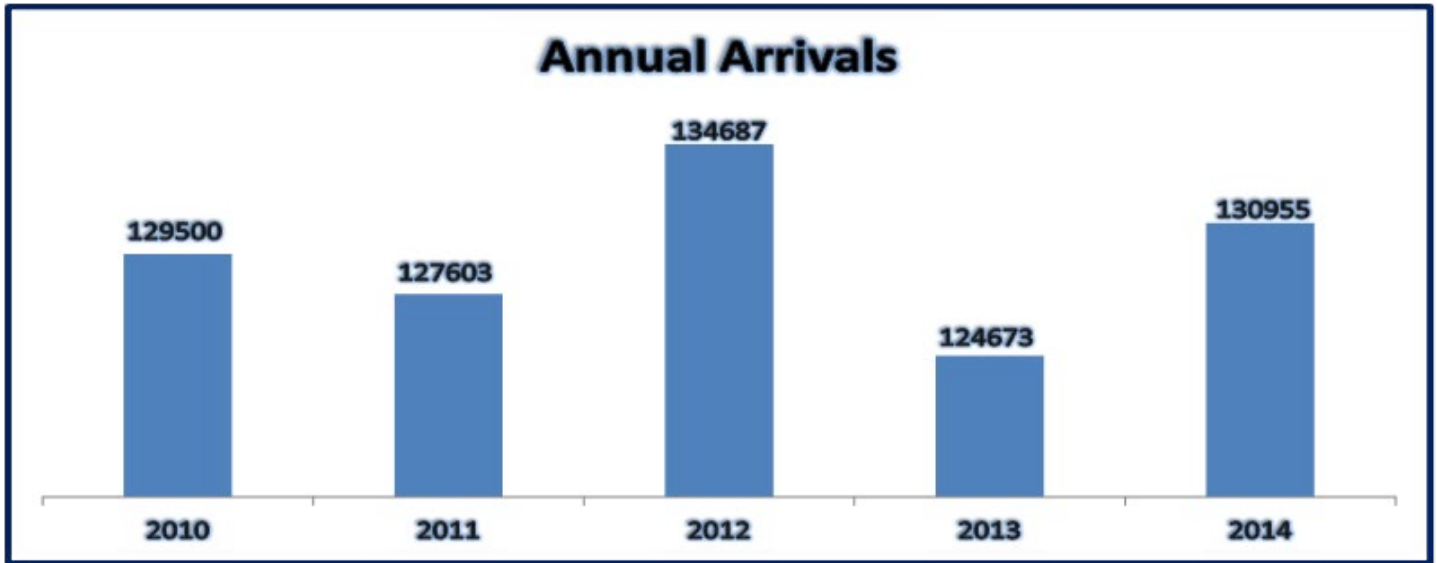
## 2014 ARRIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Total visitor arrival numbers of 130,955 have increased by 5% compared to the previous year but have only increased by 1.1% when compared to 2010.
- January, August, September and October all achieved record arrival numbers when compared to the same months over the past five years with August recording the biggest net growth of 13% when compared to the same month in 2013, highlighting the significance of big events such as SIDS to overall arrivals.

## Visitor Arrival Number Comparison 2010-2014 (January-December)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	Arrivals	Arrivals	Arrivals	Arrivals	Arrivals
January	9,916	9,718	9,613	9,080	10,135
February	7,147	7,273	7,245	6,547	7,207
March	9,062	8,775	9,078	8,246	8,120
April	8,989	9,842	10,199	9,516	9,447
May	9,949	9,448	12,410	9,406	10,497
June	11,779	11,392	14,262	12,323	11,784
July	12,958	14,269	15,048	13,274	13,180
August	10,873	11,118	10,433	11,555	13,040
September	11,317	9,757	11,009	11,227	11,503
October	9,419	10,018	9,701	10,035	10,061
November	9,896	10,526	9,456	8,957	9,984
December	18,195	15,467	16,233	14,507	15,997
<b>Totals</b>	<b>129,500</b>	<b>127,603</b>	<b>134,687</b>	<b>124,673</b>	<b>130,955</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>-7.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>

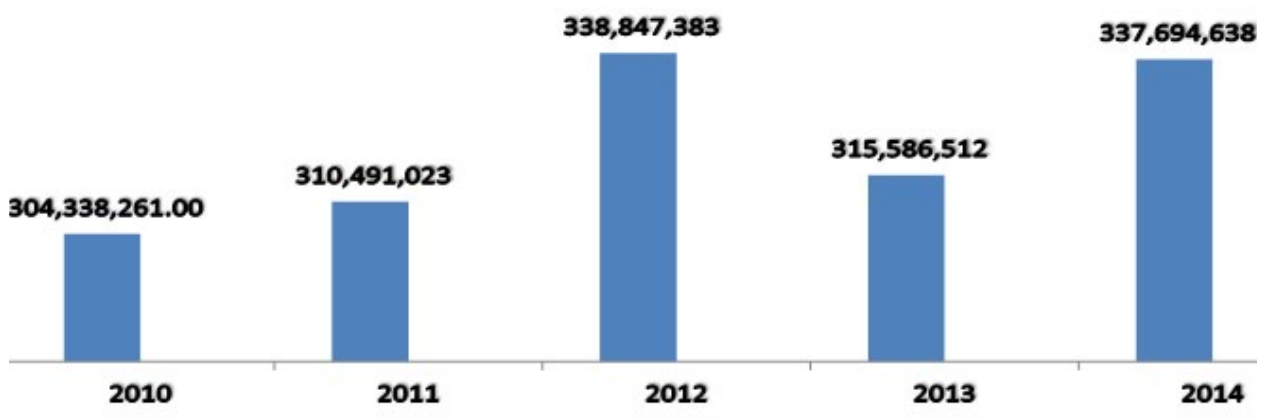




## TOURISM EARNINGS

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Avg Spend	Earnings	Avg Spend	Earnings	Avg Spend	Earnings	Avg Spend	Earnings	Avg Spend	Earnings
January	2,334	23,143,944.00	2,389	23,216,302.00	2,547	24,484,311.00	2,542	23,081,360.00	2,537	25,712,495.00
February	2,608	18,639,376.00	2,671	19,426,183.00	2,670	19,344,150.00	2,848	18,645,856.00	2,825	20,359,775.00
March	2,527	22,899,674.00	2,514	22,060,350.00	2,605	23,648,190.00	2,619	21,596,274.00	2,547	20,681,640.00
April	2,512	22,580,368.00	2,585	25,441,570.00	2,843	28,995,757.00	2,706	25,750,296.00	2,750	25,979,250.00
May	2,324	23,121,476.00	2,408	22,750,784.00	2,609	32,377,690.00	2,540	23,891,240.00	2,674	28,068,978.00
June	2,544	29,965,776.00	2,591	29,516,672.00	2,758	39,334,596.00	2,749	33,875,927.00	2,990	35,234,160.00
July	1,848	23,946,384.00	1,915	27,325,135.00	1,983	29,840,184.00	1,990	26,415,260.00	1,928	25,411,040.00
August	2,151	23,387,823.00	2,187	24,315,066.00	2,313	24,131,529.00	2,327	26,888,485.00	2,293	29,900,720.00
September	2,542	28,767,814.00	2,595	25,319,415.00	2,672	29,416,048.00	2,788	31,300,876.00	2,700	31,058,100.00
October	2,469	23,255,511.00	2,583	25,876,494.00	2,593	25,154,693.00	2,621	26,301,735.00	2,700	27,164,700.00
November	2,440	24,146,240.00	2,657	27,967,582.00	2,609	24,670,704.00	2,593	23,225,501.00	2,792	27,875,328.00
December	2,225	40,483,875.00	2,410	37,275,470.00	2,307	37,449,531.00	2,386	34,613,702.00	2,516	40,248,452.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>304,338,261.00</b>		<b>310,491,023.00</b>		<b>338,847,383.00</b>		<b>315,586,512.00</b>		<b>337,694,638.00</b>
<b>Weighted Average Spend</b>		<b>2350</b>		<b>2433</b>		<b>2516</b>		<b>2531</b>		<b>2579</b>

## Tourism Earnings



## 2014 EARNINGS HIGHLIGHTS

- Total tourism earnings of approximately \$337.7m have increased by 7% or \$22.1m compared to the previous year or increased by 11% or \$33.5m when compared to 2010. This is mainly attributed to an increase in both visitor arrivals as well as an increase in average spend per visitor for the period under review.

# Samoa Air and Coral Sun Airways announce flights between Samoa and Kiribati continued

Samoa Air CEO Chris Langton says that this is a very significant event.

“This is a first for a long time in terms of Regional Flights by a Samoan Carrier from Samoa. Its also something of a re invention of the wheel as I can recall flying the first Samoan Registered aircraft into Funafuti in 1980 and I still have the framed memento signed by the Prime Minister of the day and which now hangs in our Office here in Apia. So this has been a long time coming.”

Samoa Air sees this as the start of ongoing regional partnerships intended to restore Samoa as a Pacific Hub.

We are also planning to extend into regional Jet services by way of partnerships with other carriers who share the same interests which we do.

Langton says that there has already been a lot of interest shown in Samoan fresh vegetables and fruit supplies to both Tuvalu and to Kiribati. “Its very difficult for our growers to get into places like New Zealand and Australia but there are opportunities for us to supply to our Pacific neighbours and we are talking about fresh produce picked same day so I think its going to be much sought after.”

We also see the benefit of an option for

both Kiribati and Tuvalu passengers to connect via Samoa to Australia and to New Zealand and also to Honolulu and of course there has been no connection between Tuvalu and Kiribati for a very long time.

Coral Sun will be offering charter to Canton Island and to Christmas Island as an extension of domestic services from within Kiribati and both destinations can also be reached from Samoa. Coral Sun CEO says there are also options to include flights to Majuro in the Marshall Islands.

Samoa Air intends to continue with its “pay by weight” scheme for Passengers. “Its still the fairest way of paying for air travel” says the CEO. “Aircraft still only have weight to sell so its up to the client to tell us how much weight they want to pay for and that way the baggage always travels. No such thing as excess baggage rates as we charge the same rate per kilo regardless whether its cargo or passenger”.

Samoa Air has also given notice that it will recommence Pago services sometime in March and will be offering their XL class seats to better cater for Passengers who would enjoy the extra space. Our rates will be very competitive and we will offer some other incentives

for people to make the trip less costly. This will be a scheduled service seven days a week from Faleolo.

Langton says the King Air also comes equipped with facilities to convert the aircraft into Aero Medical configuration. “We have decided to keep the Life Port system and Medical equipments here in Samoa as this is probably the more suitable location at this time. We are also working with Samoa NHS to train some local Doctors and Paramedics in the operation of the equipment so that they can be employed by us to provide patient care in flight. Samoa Air believes that it is the first local Airline in the Pacific to pro-vide Air Ambulance services.

Samoa Air continues to provide Air Taxy to and from Savaii from Faleolo and has specialised in providing Air Surveillance to a num-ber of Countries including Samoa in support of the Australian Pacific Patrol Boat scheme. The Sea Surveillance is part of the protec-tion of the EEZ against illegal fishing. Samoa Air says its contribution is going extremely well and is being further extended across the Pacific with its primary base here in Samoa.

- Samoa Air

## Quote of the month

*“Responsible travel is not only better for our world, it’s also more interesting and memorable. Responsible tourism is the future of travel.”*

*- Simon Reeve*



# Interview with the Prime Minister

The Parliament of Samoa just last week completed the first session of its many sittings for 2015. The Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Hon. Tuilaepa Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr. Sailele Malielegaoi has replied to questions directed to government in Parliament regarding the Parliamentary Committee Report on Reports by the Auditor in Chief, through an interview with the government Savali Newspaper during the weekend. Here is the interview below in full.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

This is the translation of the interview with the Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, conducted by the Savali Newspaper on 31/1/15.

### Question 1:

The Government has received a lot of flak recently from one of the local newspapers, regarding the Government's written replies in Parliament to the reports of the Auditor and some Parliamentary Committees. One such editorial alleges that the Government's replies do nothing more than rubbish these reports. What do you say to that?

**Answer:** The debates in Parliament are broadcast live on Radio 2AP, so everyone who tunes in can listen to the real reports and the real-time exchanges taking place in Parliament. There's no big secret in what we MPs talk about.

So I'm glad you've brought up that question. Despite my busy schedule, I always make time to answer the media's questions and correct some of the misleading write-ups that emerge from time to time.

In Parliament, twice the Opposition's leadership intervened and proposed that we should adopt the responses as having been read, as they have all read the written answers and they were fully satisfied. The Speaker and I both rejected the first intervention because the rest of the country was listening on the radio and it's important that they are kept informed and hear their Government's responses. Several hours later, at 9pm the same evening, a senior member of the Opposition intervened for a second time with a proposal, appealing to our good sense of understanding that since they were satisfied with the Government's positive responses, to adopt the rest of the 51 answers or replies that were yet to be read out. I again reminded Parliament that since these replies were issues of public interest, we must give the country the opportunity to listen to the rest of the Government's written replies. But I also felt that we should defer to a decision by Parliament, through a motion that was passed subsequently reflecting the consensus of the House.

The feedback from the public was very positive and

encouraging for the Government.

The one, lone, contra opinion by a contemptuous editor typically illustrates the famous idiom that empty vessels make the most noise.

The public may still obtain copies of the full Government replies from the office of the Legislative Assembly.

### Question 2:

Another allegation is that the Government replies have thoroughly ignored the Auditor's report and the relevant Parliamentary committee report. Is there any basis to this accusation?

**Answer:** The comprehensive written replies from Government provide strong, undisputed evidence of the Government's support for the Auditor's Report and the report of the relevant Committee of Parliament. There are 51 very detailed and clear responses. These responses were further supported by the leaders of the Tautua opposition party whose speeches were broadcast live for all to hear and who asked that we immediately adopt all responses, providing added confirmation of Government's genuine respect for the statutory functions of the Audit Controller's Report and the reports from the Parliament Subcommittees.

In fact, the ultimate objectives of Government, the Audit Office Reports, and the reports of the Parliament subcommittees are one and the same, that is - to enhance Government's Accountability and Transparency in the discharge of its many different responsibilities and service delivery.

### Question 3:

Another serious allegation is that there is no Parliament deliberation on the Government's replies. Is that true?

**Answer:** All deliberations in the House must observe the Standing Orders of the house. These standing orders were not created in a vacuum. They were established to ensure order in the debates and to avoid long-winded, repetitive interactions that serve no useful purpose other than creating chaos and confusion in the House.

Continued Over

## 'It all starts from the home' - Apaula Stay Inn, Bed & Breakfast continued



**Some of the rooms at Apaula Stay Inn.**

"We would prepare breakfast for them the following morning, as well as other meals of the day, so we're used to accommodating guests." She added with a smile.

Julia is one of eight siblings and after years of learning from mum and dad about their own ways of catering for others in their home, what was a norm would now turn into an actual business. A business in which Julia says is carried out with all the warmth of a loving home and family hospitality that was instilled in them.

Following initial conversations with mum, Pele Meredith just a few years ago, plus positive feedback from their family guests, the idea then became a reality.

The name Apaula Stay Inn also derived from conversations with mum. Julia said the 'Inn' sounds also like 'in' which can mean guests 'staying in'. Also, she has shortened the name Apaula Stay Inn to its acronym 'ASI', which in Samoan means visit, all contributing to the goal of getting as many guests to visit.

ASI opened for business mid last year 2014 and its first customers were family.

"It all started with family members connecting to others, and after using other mediums of creating business opportunities, we started to host visitors from overseas."

The Bed and Breakfast accommodation

has a unique and overwhelming family feeling, with a safe and comfortable setting. It is surrounded by lush beautiful gardens, and situated right next to the ever flowing Loimata o Apaula river that provides cool fresh air.

ASI consists of 5 air conditioned rooms namely two 'Triple Shared Rooms' and three 'Double Private Rooms' with very comfortable beds and pillows; lounge room, dining area with flat screen TV, fully equipped kitchen with microwave, fridge and needed kitchenware, a library corner and a veranda overlooking the lush green environment.

Contact: Ph +685 763-8888.

- Samoa Tourism Authority

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## Interview with the Prime Minister continued

Numerous opportunities are available to both sides of the House when a report is referred for the House's Subcommittees' investigations. Where necessary, CEOs are summoned to answer queries and give evidence and on many occasions I have directed CEOs to attend the committees' deliberations when called. Moreover, the Committees are at liberty to take up discussions on any issue they raise with the relevant Minister. When a report of the committee comes back to the House, every member has a chance to address the report.

At the last session, I reminded the House that they had the Budget for six weeks to study and the leader of the Opposition kept talking about the supplementary budget of "ten plus millions" of tala when it was only eight million tala. This shows the great difficulty the Government faces, of having to run the country and also educate the Opposition.

### Question 4:

What is your explanation of the '10 percent retention' and '10 percent withholding tax' - mentioned in media reports.

Continued Over

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# Interview with the Prime Minister continued

**Answer:** They have similar explanations. These are funds being held by Government, that belong to a company under contract to Government. The Government might decide to utilize these funds to make up any shortfall in workmanship (10% retention) or to offset a higher tax liability (withholding tax). The funds are company funds, not the Government's.

For example, if the construction of a road is estimated at one million tala, then Government will hold on to \$100,000 for one year as assurance against poor workmanship. When the 12 months is over and the Government sees that the road is in good order and of quality construction, then the \$100,000 is refunded to the company. Remember, it's their own money.

The Government encourages as many contractors as possible to take up these projects because the more bids received for these works, the lower the costs to Government. When the market is healthy and competitive, the contractors are often operating at lower profit thresholds, and many of them request to withdraw their 'retention' in these times of financial hardship. Many businesses in Samoa are still developing, and some contractors are still struggling. It is why this assistance is given - to withdraw the '\$100,000' earlier - so to have the good sense to share and look ahead is the commonsense of a wise person. Conversely, to be inflexible when it makes sense not to, is to have the commonsense of a fool.

It is the duty of the responsible

Minister to monitor, carefully with caution, the company or contractor on the progress of the work, whether it's done properly and up to standard. This monitoring also determines any decision to withdraw part of the 10 percent retention or not.

If the government were to hold firmly to every single policy in place, there would probably only be one, maybe two road contractors in Samoa and the cost to improve and develop this important infrastructure would be far, far greater than it is right now.

Losing millions to save one sene? Use your God-given commonsense.

## **Question 5:**

It is also alleged that whenever the Government is accused of wrongdoing, it hides behind biblical doctrines. Is this true?

**Answer:** Wrong. And ridiculous.

The preamble to the Constitution of the Government of Samoa speaks of our country being based on Christian beliefs and its Samoan culture. Samoa is founded on God. We do not copy preambles of the constitutions of other states, which provide for "Trust in God" only. We are founded on God. What could be stronger than that?

To invoke the doctrines of Christianity is exemplary. Any Samoan who is shy to invoke Christian principles or suggests that it's bad practice, is telling us to ignore the very Christian foundation on which our Government is based.

Didn't our Lord say that anyone who refrains from proclaiming

His name publicly, He too will not proclaim him to His Father in Heaven?

The real objective of the allegation therefore is to turn Christian people's attention deliberately away from the unchristian behaviour of bearing false witness against their neighbours. How many times have we seen apology after apology in the media for deliberate misrepresentations and paying damages for court actions on proven deliberate defamations?

**Final Question:** Can a subcommittee of Parliament sue Parliament if it is not happy with the way Parliament has handled its report?

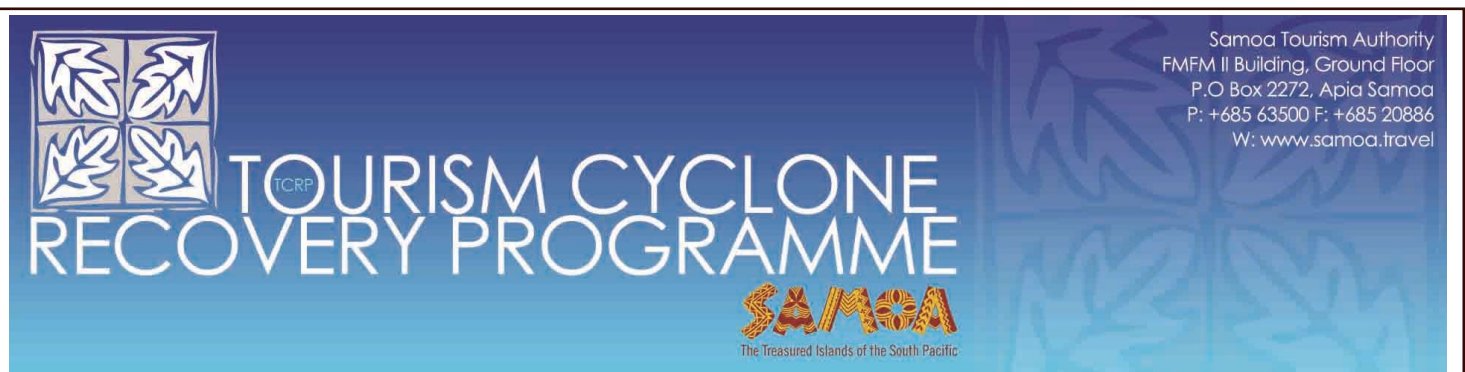
**Answer:** Parliament has already faced this challenge, some twenty years ago, when a CEO of Government took Parliament to court over a report that was not, according to the CEO's understanding of the Law, handled in a legal way by Parliament.

The resulting court decision confirmed that Parliament has the authority to set its own proceedings. What Parliament decides as the best course of action to take, is the rightful prerogative of this supreme, law-making body that represents the people of Samoa.

*And that concludes the interview between the Savali Newspaper and the Prime Minister, conducted at his home on Saturday 31st January 2015.*

- Samoa Government Press  
Secretariat





## **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Samoa Tourism Authority wishes to remind all tourism businesses and operators that the 3 year TCRP funding scheme closes 30th JUNE 2015. Cyclone Evan affected businesses are advised to submit applications for recovery assistance at their earliest convenience.

The Authority on behalf of the TCRP Facilitating Group remind all tourism businesses and operators that funding under the TCRP is still available and is set under the following conditions;

- Tourism Businesses directly affected by tropical cyclone Evan are entitled to a Reconstruction Grant of up to SAT \$100,000. (Conditions Apply)
- Registered Tourism Businesses (including those eligible to the above mentioned grant) are entitled to a Marketing Grant of up to SAT \$20,000. (Conditions Apply)

Interested business proprietors are required to contact Marita Ah Sam on [marita@samoa.travel](mailto:marita@samoa.travel) / Tel 63507, Tupai Robert on [robert@samoa.travel](mailto:robert@samoa.travel) / Tel 63508 or Salamasina Finau on [salamasina@samoa-hotels.ws](mailto:salamasina@samoa-hotels.ws) / Tel 30160 for further enquiries or assistance with application forms.

Ma le faaaloalo lava,

**The Secretariat**  
**Tourism Cyclone Recovery Programme**





## DESTINATION MARKETING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

If you're a:

- Marketing graduate with some experience
- Motivated self-starter with a can-do attitude
- Team player with excellent communications skills and attention-to-detail

We need to hear from you!

The Samoa Tourism Authority is recruiting to fill the following job opportunities in its Marketing & Promotions team:

- MARKETING SUPPORT OFFICER
- SENIOR MARKETING & PROMOTIONS OFFICER

All applications, including cover letter and detailed CV, must be addressed to the:

Chief Executive Officer

Samoa Tourism Authority

Ground Floor, FMFMII Building

APIA

Applications close at 4pm, Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February. For more information, contact Aliitasi Su'a on telephone 63532 or email [aliitasi.sua@samoa.travel](mailto:aliitasi.sua@samoa.travel).

Thank you

## For 2015 Calender of Events

The Samoa Tourism Authority (STA) has put together its Calendar of Events 2015 for its website [www.samoa.travel](http://www.samoa.travel).

Please send through any of your events you wish to include on the calender for this year, to Kristian Scanlan on [kristian@samoa.travel](mailto:kristian@samoa.travel) at your earliest convinience. Faafetai.



For more infomation or to share your story, please contact:

**Su'a Hesed Ieremia**

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